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DPC
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED

DPC 189

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS AND RADIO NEWS BRIEFING, WEDNESDAY,
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MR. REAP: Well, I have nothing to announce and there is nothing in the works.

Have you questions?

Q Joe, have we ever made an investigation of this report about this outfit Alpha-66, as to whether it really was involved in shooting up these ships?

A Apparently, John, that is one of hundreds of these Cuban exile groups. But we have no more information about that group, beyond what appears in the press.

Q You say there are hundreds of Cuban exile groups?

A Yes.

Q Do you have any idea how many hundreds there are?

A No, I don't. [Laughter]

But my understanding is that there are some-- I am not sure of my figures, something like two hundred thousand Cuban refugees in and around the Caribbean, including Miami, of course.

Q Joe, has anyone launched an investigation to find out whether they conceivably could have used an

American base for this operation, if it occurred?

A As your question pre-supposes, we do not know where this alleged attack came from. But we are looking into it, yes.

Q Do we have any reason to believe that there was such an attack?

A There have been two claims on both sides that there was, and we have no reason to doubt that there was an attack. But we just do not have any information.

Q For purposes of foreign policy, is Puerto Rico considered US territory? I am just not clear on that.

A Foreign policy, as I understand it, does not enter into Puerto Rico at all. That is United States territory.

Q Then if there is an outfit such as Alpha-66 which has its headquarters on Puerto Rico and operates a military operation in the Caribbean area, would the US have any responsibility for it?

A John, I would prefer not to answer any question quite as speculative as that. The interpretation of our laws, of course, is a matter for the Justice Department. I think we would first like to have sound factual information about it.

Q The reason for asking these questions now, Joe, as far as I am concerned, is that I have a feeling this thing is going to build up over the next few days, and I sure would like to have some answers, and I should think you might be interested in providing some answers as quickly as possible.

It wasn't until yesterday, I believe, that this name was ever heard of, or this organization was, as they say in some quarters, "surfaced," that such an organization exists. And I think you will find that interest in it will build up quite a lot, especially if it is successful in running some operations against the ships of some other country.

There are also legal questions, such as whether--as to the rules which govern such a thing.

A Well, as I have said, we have no more information about this organization, save what has appeared in the press.

Now, on August 25, we made a statement about an earlier incident from one of these groups, which was--I will give it to you, John. You might have been on leave. This might be helpful because what we say here still stands, except it is related, the language here is related to the earlier incident.

A spur-of-the-moment raid such as this does

not weaken the Communist apparatus. While we appreciate the strong feelings of this free student--that applies to the earlier one--and their hostility to this most oppressive regime, we cannot approve of the use of US territory as a base for such action.

If I may omit just a little bit of it, which is not pertinent--we must inform the participants that any repetition of such action by any group would involve the provisions of the Neutrality Act.

Q I don't know if it means anything, but the way this was read to us was "could involve" neutrality.

A There might be a typo. My paper here says "would."

Q Does this statement hold also for Alpha-66, if there--

A This is a statement of policy, yes.

Q Joe, you say we are looking into it. By "we," you don't mean the State Department?

A No, I mean the US Government. We ourselves I don't think are very well qualified to investigate.

Q This would include the Justice Department then?

A Yes, it would include the Justice Department.

Q Do you know whether the people on the scene in Miami, who have been talking about this, are being questioned, to find out what the facts are?

A I don't know. I think you might ask the Justice Department people about that.

Q They have said that the boat has returned to a base in the Caribbean area. Do we know anything about that?

A John, we don't. When I said "no information," I meant just that, no information.

Q There was also some speculation that the boat that was involved was a surplus PT boat. Do we know whether surplus PT boats are readily for sale, or can people find them?

A I don't know.

Q Joe, have we received any word from the British in connection with this case?

A Not that I know of.

Q Have we asked them for what they know about it?

A I don't know whether we have.

Q Joe, on another matter, apparently, the Portuguese Consul in Boston has asked for US asylum.

A Oh, yes.